

HOUSE No. 3436

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Alice K. Wolf

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act enhancing student opportunity for achievement and results.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Alice K. Wolf	25th Middlesex
Tom Sannicandro	7th Middlesex
Michael F. Kane	5th Hampden
Barbara A. L'Italien	18th Essex
William N. Brownsberger	24th Middlesex
Kay Khan	11th Middlesex
Peter J. Koutoujian	10th Middlesex
James B. Eldridge	Middlesex and Worcester
Carl M. Sciortino, Jr.	34th Middlesex
Ellen Story	3rd Hampshire
Sean Garballey	23rd Middlesex
Robert L. Rice, Jr.	2nd Worcester

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

AN ACT ENHANCING STUDENT OPPORTUNITY FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND RESULTS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2004 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following section:—

Section 90. (a) Subject to appropriation, the department shall establish a 4 year grant program, Student Opportunity for Achievement and Results (SOAR), to assist schools in reducing class size in grades kindergarten through 3 to a ratio of 1 teacher to 15-18 students, or, where space is unavailable, to a ratio of 2 teachers to 30 students, and to study the effects of class size reduction on student performance.

(b) The department shall develop guidelines and regulations for the administration of the grant program in accordance with the following provisions:

(1) In order for a school district to be eligible, for this program, 25 percent or more of the district's students shall be eligible for free or reduced lunch under eligibility guidelines promulgated by the federal government under 42 USC 1758.

(2) In determining which school(s) within an eligible school district shall implement this program, the district shall prioritize school(s) that meet one or both of the following criteria:

(i) The school(s) have been deemed under-performing or chronically under-performing, as under section 1J of chapter 69, as so appearing.

(ii) The school(s) have the highest percentage of students eligible for the free or reduced lunch program within the district

(3) All schools that participate shall do so for the full 4 years of the program and shall phase-in the program as follows: In the first year of the program, participating schools will reduce all kindergarten class sizes; in the second year, kindergarten classes will remain at the reduced size and schools will reduce all grade 1 class sizes; in the third year, kindergarten and grade 1 class sizes will remain at the reduced size and participating schools will reduce all grade 2 class sizes; and in the fourth year, kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 class sizes will remain at the reduced size and participating schools will reduce all grade 3 class sizes.

(4) The department shall align and coordinate the grant with other early education efforts in the Commonwealth.

(5) Teachers in small-sized classes shall receive training and professional development on instructional strategies to optimize the use of small class size.

(c) Grants shall be used to supplement, not supplant, federal, state or local funds for these activities.

(d) Program funds shall only be used for hiring of personnel, professional development, or extra materials for reduced sized classrooms. For the purposes of this section only, professional development may include per diem payments of substitute teachers when they substitute for a small-sized class teacher who is absent in order to pursue professional development in small class instructional strategies.

(e) The department shall establish statewide criteria for professional development that would qualify under clause (8) of subsection (b) of section 90 of the general laws, as so appearing.

(f) The department shall contract with a state institution of higher learning to conduct an independent study to measure and compare student performance in small-sized classes with other students of comparable demographics. The department shall submit the study to the joint committee on education, the clerk of the house and the clerk of the senate 5 years after the initiation of the grant program with interim reports as data becomes valid and available. The department shall assist the institute of higher learning conducting the independent study in the data collection.

(g) The department may retain 1 percent of the total appropriation in order to administer the program and may expend the amount deemed necessary for conducting the independent study.

(h) The department shall report annually on the status of the program to the joint committee on education by September 1st following each school year of the program.